
THE DIVERGENCE BETWEEN INTEGRATED PROGRAM FOR OUT OF SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS (IPOSA) AND COMPLEMENTARY BASIC EDUCATION IN TANZANIA (COBET): A REVIEW.

¹Sempeho Ibahati Siafu, ²Michael Ng'umbi

Institute of Adult Education, Dar es Salaam-Tanzania

¹sempeho@gmail.com; ²michael.ng'umbi@out.ac.tz

ABSTRACT

Basic education as viewed from the EFA goals is a human right both for in-school children and out of school children, youths as well as adults. Tanzania has been responding to the education needs for the out of school youths and adults through a number of education initiatives including the Integrated Program for Out of School Adolescents (IPOSA) and Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET). The paper provides a divergence between these two education initiatives as models to create knowledge regarding initiatives intending to complement formal schooling by mainstreaming learners back into the formal schooling pathways and those initiatives whose intention is to equip learners with necessary livelihood competences. At the macro level, there are two main Government initiatives namely IPOSA and COBET which serves more than 3 million out of school children and youths in the country. This paper is written as a response to the many questions from education stakeholders regarding the differences between IPOSA and COBET programs.

The approach used involved critical literature review, past experiences as well as actual field practices encountered during day-to-day implementation of the programs. The observation made shows that the two out of school initiatives differs in terms of their philosophy, methodology, target population, frameworks, flexibility, curriculum design, curriculum content and syllabus, assessment frameworks, aim or purpose of establishment, pilot arrangements as well as background.

Keywords: IPOSA, COBET, Out-of-School, ESDP, Open Schooling, Adult Literacy, Young-mothers, adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Through 1997 to 1999, UNICEF in Tanzania supported school mapping surveys in 34 districts in order to establish numbers of out-of-school aged children. It was estimated by then that nationally there were about 4 million out-of-school aged children (Musaroche & Mdachi, 2005).

Efforts by the government to rectify the situation were addressed through the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP, 2000) with the Primary Education

Development Plan (PEDP) as a first outcome in the sector wide approach (Musaroche & Mdachi, 2005). PEDP (MoEC, 2001) works concurrently within the context of an overarching national development framework of the Vision 2025, which aims to achieve a 'learned society' linking closely with the Poverty Reduction Strategy II, (the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) or MKUKUTA in Kiswahili) (URT, 2005). PEDP had four main pillars of focus, which included expanded enrolment, quality improvement, institutional arrangement and resource allocation.

While initial PEDP efforts aimed at increasing enrolments at the legal age of entry (7 years) and control drop-outs and repetitions; a mechanism was needed to enrol overaged children. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2023) defines overage school children as students who are older than the official school-age range for the educational programme they are enrolled in.

The intended age for a given grade is the age at which pupils would enter the grade if they had started school at the official primary entrance age, had studied full-time and had progressed without repeating or skipping a grade. USI criteria for determine the percentage of overage school children involves taking the sum of enrolments across all grades in the given level of education

which are 2 or more years older than the intended age for the given grade is expressed as a percentage of the total enrolment in the given level of education.

Literature shows that, children may be over-age for a grade because they started school late and/or they have repeated one or more previous grades. According to the "Education 2030 Framework for Action" the Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP should by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; this should accommodate the percentage of children over-age for grade (primary education and lower secondary education) (UIS, 2022).

Studies have indicated that placing an overage child in a cohort different from his own age group may lead to non-promotion results in damaging effects to the personalities of children and to their educational progress. According to (Morrison & Perry, 1956), part of these damaging effects are due to the removal of the child from his social group and to his placement with children having different interests and needs. Some studies have clearly indicated that the overage child is not accepted by his younger classmates and so, the problem of consideration sets-in.

Sociometric study conducted by (Peters, 1925) indicated that, non-promoted children become humiliated, discouraged or callously indifferent when confronted by the repetition of work which had previously frustrated or bored them. Consequently, such children become sullen, indifferent, rebellious, or heartsick, depending upon their personality patterns and in turn, result in less learning.

An old 7 years consecutive study conducted in 1911 by (Keyes, 1911) who investigated the ineffectiveness of non-promotion in children's school success had an amazing finding though old one. That study which involved 5000 participants concluded that: one-fifth of the non-promoted children showed improvement during the repeated year; close to two-fifths showed no improvement, and two-fifths did poorer work. On the other hand, a study conducted by (Sandin, 1944) concluded that, non-promoted or overage children are more likely to receive reproof and punishment than were the regularly promoted pupils. According to (Sandin, 1944), their so-called "misbehaviour" consisted primarily of whispering, day-dreaming, inattentiveness, poking and tripping others, and engaging in activities other than studying.

The experience we have in Tanzania in handling non-promoted and overage children can be looked upon through two programs at the basic education levels.

The two programs are Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) and Integrated program for out of school adolescents (IPOSA). The aim of writing this paper is to respond to stakeholders' questions including among others, what is the difference between these two programs? Another question is: are we not duplicating efforts by having both COBET and IPOSA programs? What are unique elements each program has?

Hitherto, lots of lessons are known and can be attributed to the actual implementation of IPOSA and COBET programs in Tanzania. The lessons learnt from Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) model in 5 rural districts of Tanzania Mainland were adopted for wider national replication. After successful pilot phase COBET was mainstreamed into PEDP and is used as a strategy for absorbing all out-of-school children aged 11 to 13 years, who, after completing 3 years of the COBET curriculum would mainstream into the formal primary school system into either Standard Five or Six (based on performance in the national standard four exams). As for the older children of 14 to 18-year-old, after completing three years of the specialized curriculum, would sit for the national primary school leaving examinations; and if they passed, they would transit into the formal secondary school or opt for other post

primary education avenues, including vocational training.

OBJECTIVE

This paper is a response to requests from various education stakeholders who wished to understand IPOSA program in terms of its origin, program structure and organization, practicability. Readers may find this review paper useful in view of an account given that it provides direction for potential research areas which can be explored further, gaps identified in the design and implementation of out of school initiatives particularly in the moment like this when COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many children becoming out of school.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used a desk review methodology. At times, theories and practices find a dichotomy. Thus, apart from experience and actual practices, this paper includes a survey of previous studies and census report by the Government of Tanzania, UNICEF and UNESCO as well as other researches related to the education initiatives for the out of school children and youths. A critical account of IPOSA program is provided to establish a current state of knowledge and practices in IPOSA implementation.

DISCUSSION

COBET and IPOSA: The Background

As explicated earlier, COBET was initiated in Tanzania in 1999 by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training with support from UNICEF to cater for learning needs of children and adolescents that for various reasons did not have the opportunity to enrol in primary schools (Bwatwa & Kamwela, 2010; Macpherson, 2007). Its general aim was and still is *to mainstream school-age children into the formal system*, especially to enrol children and youth from the disadvantaged groups including those with disability and girls (Bwatwa & Kamwela, 2010). It started as a pilot project in five districts, namely, Kisarawe, Masasi, Musoma Rural, Ngara and Songea Rural. In 2003/2004, COBET programme was scaled up countrywide (Bwatwa & Kamwela, 2010).

Categorically, children who enter COBET Cohort I (11 to 13 years) are eligible for mainstreaming into the formal schooling system (primary school) when they finish their learning cycle, while those in Cohort II (between 14 and 18) are eligible to join secondary education and other forms of education such as vocational training and join the labour market after they complete their learning cycle (Bwatwa & Kamwela, 2010; Macpherson, 2007).

Then again, IPOSA was initiated in 2017 as a result of recommendations that emanated from an out of school study conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2015 under the technical and financial support from UNICEF. IPOSA is meant to cater for the need of out of school adolescents 14+ who missed the opportunity for formal schooling. IPOSA is not intended for mainstreaming but rather to provide alternative learning opportunities for the youths. IPOSA was at the beginning started in 8 regions of Kigoma, Tabora, Dodoma, Dar es Salaam, Njombe, Iringa, Mbeya and Songwe through UNICEF support. It is clear now, just from their history IPOSA and COBET programs finds a dichotomy.

Back again, COBET employs pedagogy and is based on child-friendly principles; it follows the primary school curriculum (Bhalalusesa, 2002; DeJaeghere, 2004). COBET used to have five core subjects emanating from the core curriculum namely, communication skills (Kiswahili and English), general knowledge (maarifa), mathematics (hisabati), work skills (stadi za kazi) and personality building (ujenzi wa haiba) (Bhalalusesa, 2002). Contrary, IPOSA employs andragogy and is based on principles for adult learning and education (ALE) as opposed to COBET which focuses on child-friendly pedagogical principles. IPOSA has four learning components namely, Literacy skills, entrepreneurial

skills, life skills and pre-vocational skills. Besides, IPOSA is an integrated education program. However, both COBET and IPOSA were developed by involving the Ministry of Education, Institute of Adult Education (IAE), and Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) on the part of the government among others.

In view of pedagogical and andragogical principles, there is a controversy whether COBET is really an adult education program as opposed to IPOSA. It was stated elsewhere (Emmanuel, 2018) that COBET has some elements of adult education as it accommodates cohort II students and also by the fact that it is flexible and permits multiple entries. It is difficult to answer the question of multiple exits in COBET. Besides, in COBET the way its objective, teaching methods and implementation modality are structured indicate that it is not an adult education programme. The main objective of introducing COBET programme was, “to raise the rate of enrolment in primary education” (Massawe, Seka, Baynit, & Mtitu, 2000). Its rationale is based on the desire to have children attain an avenue for getting mainstreamed into the formal schooling system and hence, clear the backlog of illiterate children and arrest illiteracy from increasing.

Basing on policy-related ideas, an argument that COBET is not an adult education programme becomes strong because the programme is meant for ‘children’ and children are not adults (Katunzi & Manda, 1999; Massawe et al., 2000). This view is also supported by the fact that learners in COBET programme wear school uniforms. However, in terms of placement COBET is non-formal education program and so fits within Tanzania education system sub-sector called Adult and Non-Formal Education (ANFE).

Differences between COBET and IPOSA

i) Difference in philosophy

COBET is based on the philosophy of education called **essentialism**, which means it embraces the core curriculum as its major focus. Its aim is to re-introduce the learner back to the education system. Essentialists believe that there are important issues of curriculum that need to be covered by everyone. Conventional school systems are often developed on essentialist ideas. Learners have to be taught and examined in the core curriculum. IPOSA is based on **progressivism**, which “stresses an experiential, problem-solving approach to learning and emphasizes experience of learner as the main determining factor in seeking solutions and change and thus believes in the social reform role of education” (Kumar, 2012).

Its focus is on transformation of life from poor state to better state using the available resources – especially the power of groups. It is about learning collectively to solve problems in the communities.

ii) Difference in curriculum

COBET is a complementary programme and it uses a complementary curriculum. It simply means it complements the conventional system. It means it uses the core curriculum as that used in the conventional system. At the end of the day, the learner will be examined and mainstreamed to the conventional system, using the core curriculum. On the other hand, IPOSA (integrated programme for out of school adolescents) uses an alternative curriculum – some call it community-based curriculum. It is alternative to the conventional system. It means it has adopted an expanded curriculum to include courses aiming at job creation; and life skills. Its aim is not to teach and examine learners to be re-introduced to the education system; rather to improve skills necessary for work in the community. It is about performance improvement. IPOSA does not use the core curriculum say Mathematics, English, Geography, History, Civics etc.; it is on skills development around various trades according to the needs of the communities including literacy and numeracy skills.

Curriculum content for COBET and IPOSA

In view of the Adult and Non-Formal Education Sub-Sector, Medium Term Strategy 2010/11 – 2014/15 (page 14-15) there were (xiv) major challenges encountered by the ANFE sub-sector programs and of these, the challenge number (iv) stated that “The co-existence of incompatible curriculum between COBET Cohort I with that of primary education” (MOEVT, 2010). That is to say, COBET since its conception was meant to be compatible with and act as a compliment for the formal primary school education and with that it is expected to have its curriculum contents resembling that of primary school education so that finally COBET learners would sit for the formal standard seven primary education examination offered by NECTA.

Owing to that, The COBET programme was set to have five syllabi namely: Mbinu za Mawasiliano (Communication skills which deals with both English and kiswahili in one volume; Maarifa (General knowledge); Hisabati (Mathematics); - stadi za Kazi (Work skills); - Ujenzi wa Haiba (Personality Development).

IPOSA on the other hand, has been designed on the basis of the slogan "No child is left behind".

This programme complies with the needs of beneficiaries as identified in the evaluation report of COBET and IPPE, with the aim of reducing the number of children and youths who are out of the formal education system. IPOSA is not meant to be compatible with formal primary school education. That said, IPOSA is not intended to act as a compliment for the formal primary school education and with that it is not expected to have its curriculum contents resembling that of primary school education. IPOSA learners are not expected to sit for the formal standard seven primary education examination offered by NECTA rather, IPOSA seeks a place within the national qualifications framework to stand as progressive alternative learning with its own defined progression pathways.

The position of IPOSA within Tanzanian National Qualifications Framework (TQF) is the topic in the next article. This is so because studies conducted before under MoEST such as Complementary Secondary Education in Tanzania (COSET) and Out of School Profiling Study (OOS) had indicated that out of school adolescents have learning needs that may not be catered for within the core curriculum. Precisely, there what is called context-based learning needs among them. It is for that reason IPOSA curriculum is just a framework that allows for flexibility in catering individual learning needs basing on the diversity of Tanzania communities.

On account of that, IPOSA does not have a fixed number of syllabi. The number of syllabi is expected to increase with the increased learning needs of learners as far as cultural diversity is in Tanzania.

i) **Difference in flexibility**

COBET is a fixed programme with a defined number of subjects, time table, duration while IPOSA is more of a curriculum framework which is flexible. By flexible it means its curriculum (i) allows ability to adapt individual learning needs; (ii) it is based much more on skills and has attitude-based learning objectives; (iii) content can be localized depending on the needs of the learners in a particular society; and (iv) has experiential learning activities that foster the development of skills and knowledge

ii) **Difference in the target population**

Target population is not a major issue. In fact, we could have parallel programs for the same target group because the two programs have two distinctive philosophical orientations, so that learners can have a choice of either to re-enter the school system or go for the alternative curriculum and improve their employability. However, as it stands, the target population for COBET is **children** (though overage) while IPOSA is targeting **adolescents and youth** who are out of school and who wish to improve their job

skills or change jobs (IAE, 2019). To begin with, IPOSA is on basic literacy and post-literacy skills plus life skills, pre-vocational skills and entrepreneurial skills, but as a framework it could be extended to many other programs for youth training and entrepreneurship, and thus function as a professional development avenue for community-based skills development initiatives.

iii) **Difference in methodology**

Furthermore, IPOSA and COBET differs in terms of their methodologies. While IPOSA uses **andragogy**, COBET uses **pedagogy**. As a matter of understanding, pedagogy is a child-focused teaching approach, whereas andragogy is an adult-focused teaching approach. In other words, pedagogy is the art and science of helping kids learn, whereas andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn. IPOSA targets adolescents from 14+ years who qualify under adult learning. A summary between IPOSA and COBET programs is given in Table 1.

CONCLUSION

Most studies conducted regarding learning needs among OOS in Tanzania reveal variations of training needs as per their local context. COBET was set to cater for the needs of Tanzanian children whose primary interest was on the kind of OOS initiative

that would later mainstream them [back] into the formal primary school education. Due to variations in learning needs, COBET since its introduction could not serve adolescents and youths whose primary interest is being able to read, write and count along with skills for livelihood. In view of that, when 2015 OOS study was conducted Tanzania had more than 3.5 million OOS as compared to 4 million found by the time COBET was introduced. That is to say, COBET had left behind OOS who have advanced age and whose interest differs from the COBET's overall aim.

That gap was supposed to be filled by designing another education program in the form of "alternative learning" so that Tanzania as a country may avail more education opportunities for all OOS found in 2015 study whose learning needs were not catered for in COBET. Meticulously, IPOSA is not designed to compete with COBET rather to open up more learning and education opportunities to Tanzanian OOS who could otherwise be at messy. Any sensible heart would feel it worth to have IPOSA running with strength in order to serve majority of OOS who are both illiterate and lack skills for living which even pose a danger to the Country's security. It is with that regard IPOSA promises to leave no one behind.

Declaration of interest

The Author declares no conflict of interest.

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